

The China Scholars and U.S. Intelligence

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by David Horowitz

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BEFORE ACTUALLY BOARDING AIR FORCE ONE for his February meeting with Chairman Mao, Richard Nixon will be forced to run a gauntlet of intelligence briefing sessions designed to bring him up to date on the latest Chinese developments. The cram course on contemporary China, programmed by CIA director Richard C. Helms, will range from an elementary Who's Who in the Chinese government and questions of unfamiliar proletarian protocol—e.g., What should Pat Nixon say to Mme. Mao, the militant leader of the Peking Red Guards?—to more esoteric information not generally found in either the *New York Times* or the *Peking People's Daily* Sunday Supplement. More or less hard answers to questions like "Whatever happened to Lin Piao, Chairman Mao's ex-close-comrade-in-arms?" "What progress are Chinese rocket experts making with their long range missile systems?" "How do the factions within the People's Army and Communist Party line up in the present leadership struggle?"

In order to provide Nixon with the data he needs on this trip, Helms is able to cull the output of hundreds of military and civilian radio intercept operators, who listen-in on a rotating shift, round-the-clock basis to Chinese radio transmissions. Also mobilized are the battalions of cryptographers at Fort Meade, Md., trying to break Chinese military, diplomatic and commercial codes; the covert operators in such places as Hong Kong and Singapore, busily suborning Asian journalists; and, more prosaically, the dozens of linguistically trained Ph.D.'s hard at work in Langley, Va., translating Chinese telephone books. But there is another intelligence network on which Nixon will rely which is just as vital, if somewhat smaller and more loosely articulated. This is the academic phalanx of American China scholars: the once scorned and now twice-rewarded denizens of a startling variety of scholarly and semi-scholarly institutions. These range from conglomerate think tanks like the RAND Corporation, and elite centers of corporate-academic cross-fertilization like the Council on Foreign Relations to seemingly more chaste academic set-ups like the East Asian Institutes at Harvard and Columbia. But the distinctions are more apparent than real, for what we have in China studies is the clearest case yet in which the big foundations and the State Department founded, funded, nurtured and directed an entire academic field, providing at last a definitive answer to the age-old question: "Who shall educate the educators?"

[AN INTELLIGENCE WHO'S WHO]

FOLLOWING THE MC CARTHY FREEZEOUT China scholars began to come in from the cold in the early Kennedy years. Something of the origins of the American China scholar intelligence network that subsequently developed can be gleaned from a private letter written in 1962 by the head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (BIR), Dr. Allen Whiting. This letter, made available by its recipient, who at that time was the head of Berkeley's Center for China Studies, aimed to recruit him to the BIR's "elite project." Who was going to take over after Chairman Mao?, the BIR wanted to know. "Experience with post-Stalin Russia," Whiting wrote, "has shown the importance of anticipating succession crises in communist countries and especially of understanding the significance of their outcome in terms of changes in communist policy." American intelligence had already sifted *prima facie* evidence suggesting conflicts within the Chinese leadership. Whiting complained, however, that inadequate attention to the make-up of the factions "has left us with no firm picture of attitudes held by competing groups on such

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